

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

In the Claims:

1-10. (canceled)

11. (New) A method of fabricating an operating arm for a construction machine, said operating arm being constituted by a plural number of joined plates and in the shape of a square tubular structure in cross section, said method comprising the steps of:

preparing a wide plate-like material having alternately thick and thin wall portions in a transverse direction by butt welding side to side said plural number of joined plates in different thicknesses;

bending said wide plate-like material along said thick wall portions to form thick wall corner portions of said square tubular structure, and to form a U-shaped structure having a U-shape in cross section with an opening on one side, through plastic deformation; and

welding a separate plate-like member to said U-shaped structure to close said opening to form said square tubular structure.

12. (New) The method of fabricating an operating arm for a construction machine as defined in claim 11, wherein said preparing step further comprises welding a boss mounting thick plate to be formed into a boss mount member to one longitudinal end of said wide plate-like material, and bending said boss mounting

thick plate into a U-shape in cross section simultaneously with the bending of said wide plate-like material to form said U-shaped structure.

13. (New) The method of fabricating an operating arm for a construction machine as defined in claim 11, wherein said thin and thick plates are joined by high energy density welding of deep penetration in said preparing step.

14. (New) The method of fabricating an operating arm for a construction machine according to claim 11, wherein said preparing step includes positioning surfaces of said thin wall portion flush with surfaces of said thick wall portions on an outside in the direction of thickness but indented from said thick wall portions on an inside in the direction of thickness prior to butt welding.

15. (New) The method of fabricating an operating arm for a construction machine according to claim 11, wherein said preparing step includes positioning surfaces of said thin wall portions indented from surfaces of said thick wall portions on an outside in the direction of thickness but flush with said thick wall portions on an inside in the direction of thickness prior to butt welding.

16. (New) The method of fabricating an operating arm for a construction machine according to claim 11, wherein said preparing step includes positioning surfaces of said thin wall portions indented from surfaces of said thick wall portions on both sides in the direction of thickness prior to butt welding.